

Floodland

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Floodland

by [1candyangle](#)

Summary

One infected person only needs to bite someone once to spread the illness, death and aching hunger.

Yuuji suffers through the end of the world, leaning on his fellow students and Gojo-sensei.

For Sukuna, a pyrrhic victory is in his sights.

Notes

Happy spooky month!!! I write a lot when work is horrible, so congrats to all of you because unless I get laid off then this should be complete by the end of the month.

Tags will be updated with each chapter.

My Bones to the Sea

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Megumi walks with a purpose, hands shoved in his pockets. They all have a day off, everyone in the school. No curses to chase down, no homework to complete or training rounds. Yesterday was a festival day for the normals of society and filled to the brim with work for them all and so today is a well deserved day of rest.

And so Megumi heads into his sister's hospital room.

Peace and quiet encompasses the space. Tsumiki barely moves, barely breathes. She is stable and no wires are connected to her, other than her feeding line. Megumi doesn't do anything silly like talk to the coma patient, doesn't know what he would say regardless.

But he has a free day. And he wants to spend it with his sister.

Megumi does what he would in his dorm room. He puts on some soft music, volume low to be respectful of the other people around. Then he grabs his book and begins to read aloud. It is a simple book, Megumi already has an educated guess as to what the end will be, but it is interesting with the writing style and the protagonist. The antagonist could use some work but he knows she is Tsumiki's type.

Megumi reads to his not-dead-yet sister, page ruffling in a steady pace.

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Nobara strides to the beautician, clean shoes clacking on the nice floor. She managed to get a little extra cash on the side by selling some of her older, less used clothes and Nobara wants to spoil herself.

A nice haircut, manicure and pedicure are just what she needs to have some self-care after weeks and weeks of relentless curse hunting.

Dealing with the stupidity of so many people really takes a toll on a lady's stress levels.

The beautician smiles at her, long beautiful hair pulled up in a high ponytail, eyelashes and makeup tastefully done. Nobara accepts the compliments to her thick hair and clear complexion with a giggle, happy to talk about the more feminine things for a little while.

They trade gossip back and forth about celebrities and the worker talks about the date she went on for the festival yesterday, about the guy and how well he treated her. It is simple and vapid and so, so normal.

Nobara laughs lightly and in return tells the lady a funny story about Megumi and Yuuji being stupid - which, honestly, is a lot of her stories about them, specially ones appropriate for non-sorcerers.

Hair cut and dyed blonde, Nobara relaxes into her chair, letting the lady pamper her. All the other worries in the world seem so far away like this.

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Yuuji skitters around the corner, dust flying in his wake. A joyful chuckle is already on his lips as the furry tail of the dog darts just out of sight. The young boy and his family try to call the dog back but the chase is on. Yuuji grins, excited.

Easy, low stake activity. Catch the loose dog, get some pets in and maybe a few puppy kisses. A perfect way to spend the day off.

Yuuji isn't even breathing hard when he swoops in to pick up the running pup, carefully supporting its weight evenly. The fluff ball whines and tries to nibble on his fingers. Yuuji speaks softly to the creature, hoping to calm down the rabbit fast beating of her heart as the family catches up to them.

“Thank you,” The tiny child beams, missing his front tooth. “Missy runs too fast for me.”

Yuuji smiles warmly down at the kid. “You’re welcome. Hold on tight to her leash from now on, okay kid? It’s up to you to keep her safe on walks.”

With a final pat on the dog’s head, Yuuji hands over the leash to the little kid. Yuuji waves at the family as he turns back around, heading for the mall. Going shopping to pick up some things with the little pocket money he has sounds fun.

It is nice to step away from the pressures of his normal life.

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A shout and a scream echo down the hospital hall, interrupting Megumi’s reading. He frowns, eyebrows twisting as he stands up to curiously peer out the door to see the commotion.

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A car slams on its breaks in the street outside the shop, the squealing of the tires proceeding the crash of metal. Nobara rests a calming hand on the startled beautician’s shoulder, rising up fast herself to see the accident.

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The mall is chaos. People stream out of every exit, eyes wide and wet, fear clinging to their skins. Not even thinking to hesitate, Yuuji runs towards the danger.

A man is attacking the nurse right outside the door. Instinctively, Megumi's arm snaps up and down, slamming hard into the man's neck painfully. The man crumbles into a groaning ball on the ground. Smoothly, Megumi pulls the nurse out of range.

"Are you okay?" He asks her, eying the man warily as he withers on the floor, strange noises streaming from his mouth.

The nurse is bleeding profusely from her shoulder, her hand shakily putting pressure on the gaping wound.

"Oh my god, he bit me!" she says, shock colouring her voice. "The chart said the patient was aggressive but not like this."

Other nurses are rushing over to her, checking on her wound. Megumi steps back with a nod to the security guard as he comes up to the unruly patient. The man on the ground twists with a snap of blood soaked teeth, chomping down on the guard's forearm in seconds.

The guard screams and more people jump into action, trying to sedate the patient as he trashes, blood and muscle exposed as he refuses to let go of the guard's arm. Megumi is helpless to do anything but watch as more and more security push into the scene, trying to rescue the guard.

Another shout and scream echoes down the hall, shivers running down Megumi's spine as all his instincts start to scream at him, telling him to open his eyes and look -

A curse. A curse is growing before his very eyes as a nurse runs away from a pale young lady in an open hospital gown in hot pursuit. Her mouth and hands are red, her footsteps leading a trail of blood.

"Help," the new nurse screams, panic building in them all as the

guards are bit one by one by the crazed man in their distraction.
“Help, Help! She ate him, she ate him!”

Someone sticks their head out of their hospital room just as the lady is passing by and she grabs him, biting into his neck in a huge spray of arterial blood.

The curse wiggles happily, morphing grotesquely.

Minutes - seconds, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter the witnesses or the site or anything. Megumi centers himself, fingers twitching. He can't let this continue. He can't let the curse or the illness of these people keep hurting others.

His wolves jump out of the shadows, their teeth aiming for the fledgling curse first, snapping it into pieces. Then they twist on the spot, tackling the sick lady to the ground, the other man falling, already too late to save his life as his blood splatters on the floor.

One wolf holds her down as his other grabs the leg of the man still gnawing on the guards, pulling him back out and away from the victims.

Another scream sounds, cutting off suddenly from deeper in the hospital. A second, a third, a fourth. Megumi swallows back bile, staring as the bitten nurse goes pale and vomits. The guards follow, one by one, each with a vivid red bite.

“Call the police,” a shaking doctor shouts as he puts his hand on the man who bled out. “Sedation isn't helping. We need order. These people are very sick. We have twenty admitted with these symptoms.”

His wolves are sitting on two infected, not allowing them to move. Nurses scramble, patients cling to the walls and door frames. Chaos takes over the ward, people panicking and bleeding, the ill uncaring and still grasping, their blood soaked maws wide and inhuman.

Something is wrong. Even when facing multiple near death battles, Megumi has never felt this overbearing instinct of danger - of his dogs whining in trepidation.

Megumi wants to run away, the want foreign to him in all ways.

His sister is here. Megumi turns on his heels, grabbing the wheelchair from the hallway. Her safety first, then he will deal with the trouble brewing in the hospital.

She is slim and easy to transfer over, Megumi hurriedly tossing her medicine into his bag, covering her lap in a nice warm blanket. He needs to move her out of here.

Megumi wheels her to the safety of the street as harried policemen hurry into the hospital, their radios overactive and constantly buzzing.

Even in the fresh air outside there are still more shouts, blood curling screams in the distance.

Megumi shivers, pushing the chair towards the train station.

Something is very wrong.

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The car ran into the light pole. Good Samaritans are already pulling the ill looking driver out, checking him for injuries. A few other people are sitting on the ground, dazed.

A man who is helping the driver starts to scream, punching the driver on the head as the driver attacks him suddenly. The driver lets go, lunging at the person who pulls him away, teeth snapping at them too.

As a whole, the crowd backs away, scrambling back from the man. Nobara covers her mouth in horror at the sight of the man's bloody teeth ripping into the skin of people within range. People are shouting at him, screaming for the police. The beautician cries big tears of terror, squeaking at the blood, the pain in peoples voices as they deal with the biting man.

Nobara itches to grab her hammer, want to put him down but she can't - he is human, and obviously sick, mentally and physically.

Luckily, a big guy, bigger than Todo, slams the biter to the ground, head hitting the concrete with a crack. The smaller guy tries to move but big dude is unrelenting in his force, refusing to move an inch. The biter is pinned fully now and the crowd gives a huge sigh of relief.

Nobara stretches her back and hustles the other lady back into her shop.

“Was that - will they be okay out there?” The beautician whimpers, her perfectly manicured hand daintily holding a pale cheek.

Nobara grimaces. “I don’t know, that was very weird.”

Nobara’s gut twists and she starts to gather her stuff with a thin smile to the obviously shaken lady. The beautician bites her lips, nervously twisting her fingers together, both of them unsettled on a deeper plane.

A bloody hand slams against the glass window of the shop, screams ramping up from outside loudly.

Without thinking about the consequences, the hammer appears in Nobara’s hand. She plants her feet, hurrying the screaming beautician behind her as the glass starts a spiderweb of cracks, the palm hitting hard and uncaringly.

It brakes and three sets of hands try to enter the window at once, blood pouring from their limbs as the shards of glass cut. The people seem unbothered, their hands searching desperately for Nobara and the other trapped lady.

But they are still human. Nobara can tell, can feel it in her bones that they are not curses, no energy - not even the usual hum of a persons aura. She doesn’t want to hurt them.

Her eyes trail around the room spotting the back exit.

The beautician is crying, trembling. Nobara grabs her roughly by the arm, towing her along. “Come on, let’s get out of here.”

Nobara doesn’t wait for the response. She pulls the lady with her out the back exit, hammer raised in defence as they hurry through the alley way. Sirens whirl in the distance, echoing in the sounds of shattering glass and running footsteps. People are screaming, shouting.

The air is thick with something. Nobara spots an inky black splotch curving on the gutter just on the other side of the road. A new curse brewing in the turmoil.

Nobara swears, turning to look at the scared woman's face. "How far away is your place?"

"Ooh, a few blocks away, not - not too far." she replies, voice quiet as she hurriedly wipes at her wet cheeks.

Nobara nods, glaring at the curse. Another guttural noise sounds from the vacated store just behind them and Nobara knows they need to move.

"Run there," she tells the beautician. "Do not talk to anyone, do not bring any attention your way. Your only goal is to get to safety. Do you understand?"

The lady nods, face pale as another scream sounds. "Come - come with me." Her hand rests on Nobara's bicep. "Please, you need to get to safety too."

Nobara twirls her hammer, smiling gently at the lady. "I'll be fine. I need to make my own way home."

The lady hesitates. Then they hear it.

Thump.

Thump.

Nobara jumps to attention. A bloody mess of a man missing half his face huffs at them, teeth exposed down to the gums in his mouth full of red.

Nobara pushes the lady behind her. "Run!"

The beautician whimpers and listens, her foot steps hurrying away. Nobara settles her shoulders and hopes that the girl can make it, can reach the tangible safety of her apartment.

The man growls and charges. Her hammer swings true, faster than any ill human, bashing the destroyed face into further carnage. He doesn't move as he slumps down into a heap, skull cracked open. Nobara frowns, her hands shaking.

The curse hisses at her from the road and it is easier to swing the second time.

Bloody nails yet hair still perfect, Nobara sets out for the long, dangerous walk home.

In today's world, there are so many reasons for people to be running from the mall in a panic.

Yuuji's life isn't worth much, realistically. He is going to die sooner rather than later and for good reason. He is strong and fast and wants to help as much as possible until the time for his execution. But he knows he will be executed at some point. He is waiting for it with open arms.

And if he gets to die protecting someone, that is a good death.

More likely though, his thick constitution means that he can help put down the threat that is making these normal people panic. Thanks to Sukuna, he heals fast.

Yuuji runs, dodging the people streaming out. Some are bloody, some are crying. Sukuna rumbles with dull interest, Yuuji feeling him shift in his sternum.

The inside of the mall is in chaos. People are on top of each other, hands clawing at exposed skin, ripping away fabric as the victims howl in pain. Yuuji's mouth drops open in shock at the grotesque sight of flesh being eaten - eaten! Actually, totally being chewed and swallowed right off the still screaming human.

Shock doesn't stop Yuuji for long. His fist shoots out, hard and fast to push the cannibal away. The guy rolls as the victim curls to his side, vomiting with a wet, smelly splat on the blood stained ground.

There is another altercation happening a few feet away and Yuuji swings around with his foot, slamming it into the gut of the attacker - she goes flying, teeth left behind in the shoulder of a catatonic teen girl.

He keeps moving, instincts driving him forward, deeper into the horde of assaults. A father is trying to run to safety, a kid in his arms as a bloody mouthed mess chases him, stumbling blind due to missing half of their face. Yuuji intercepts, putting the injured person into a lock.

The father nods gratefully and runs out of the building, leaving Yuuji there. The person shakes in his grip, rattling noises huffing out their mouth.

“Hey, hey!” Yuuji shouts at them. “I don’t know what the fuck is going on, but you are bleeding everywhere. Stop trying to fight me and relax so we can get you some help.”

The person groans and doesn’t listen, teeth snapping into the air.

Yuuji searches around for help, for guidance on his next step as he stays steady with the wiggling person in his hold. Another injured person, his arm dangling on his red-wet side starts to walk towards them.

Yuuji smiles, relaxing. “Hey, dude! What the hell happened in here?”

The man doesn’t reply and something twitches inside Yuuji, curse energy building automatically as the shadows on the wall start to ripple. Yuuji blinks as he realizes there must be a curse affecting all these people.

“Here, hold on to this guy for me, I gotta go do a real quick thing.” Yuuji carelessly tosses the person he is holding on to the other guy, hoping they will get along while he quickly rushes to the center of the slowly growing curse. It takes a single punch, the curse new and small. Hardly any more effort than punching the attackers.

He turns around and stills.

Twenty or so people stare at him. Their eyes are dark, unblinking. All of them have red mouths, bloody and torn clothes. Injuries range from mild to loss of limbs. Yuuji doesn’t dare move. His heart flutters strangely. Usually, Yuuji would be spouting off some kind of words, something to break the building tension but.

But.

His instincts are going wild. He feels... he feels like a mouse. Like prey.

The group moves forward as one, swaying up and into an eerie sync. The mall is saturated with the sharp smell of fresh blood and Yuuji feels his heart skip, his lungs shuddering.

“What the hell is happening to you people...” Yuuji murmurs, eyes tracking the groups closeness to him worriedly.

Sukuna’s mouth pops up on his cheek, voice as oily as the blood on the floor. “This infection... there is no recovery. Kill them all.”

Yuuji snarls reflexively, taking a half-step back. “Fuck you, I won’t.”

The first person reaches him - and then it is an avalanche of grabbing hands and snapping teeth, Yuuji dodging and kicking out hard, tearing his sleeves off, forcing them back and away. Each time one is pushed off, another takes it’s place.

The people don’t stop trying to bite him. To eat him. Yuuji fights on as Sukuna cackles about the downfall of humanity.

With shiver, Yuuji finds Sukuna’s words sincere.

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On this day, the outbreak is declared. Shelter in place. Do not interacted with the ill, wounded and dead.

Lord, have mercy.

Sweet Water Kills

Chapter Summary

The apocalypse is now. The school is a sanctuary, protected by Gojo. The outside is drowning.

Chapter Notes

Trigger warning!!! Big trigger warning!!! It is in the tags, please check the tags I'm begging you. Graphic chapter filled with death, violence and gore. Major character death and suicide. All hurt. No comfort. If that is not good for your headspace, please back click now. This is a story meant to horrify and hurt, but not to cause my lovely readers real harm. I cherish you so please take care of your own needs.

Yuuji knows death. He has death festering inside him, the demon sitting on a throne of bones and guts. Death pulled his grandfather away from life, stole Junpei and even tried to destroy Yuuji a time or two.

He knows death. Death walks beside him, breathes with him and is hanging over the head of every living being whether or not they acknowledge it.

And for death to be scary, to be horrible and anxiety inducing - one needs to have the will to live, to keep going, to move past the pain and forge through it to the other side, still breathing.

These people have no survival instincts. No one dodges his punches, no one flinches as the others scramble up their bodies, crushing lungs and ribs as they move purposefully to attack Yuuji.

Yuuji yanks his thigh back from another set of sharp teeth, kicking the head of the person near all the way off. His elbow catches a mutilated lady's chin, her front teeth remaining in his skin even as her neck snaps. Dark, coagulated blood sprays out of her destroyed mouth and covers Yuuji in the strangely cold fluid.

The bites burn.

They don't stop coming. One after another after another keep piling on, trying to force their way to Yuuji's fighting stance.

Yuuji fights for his survival, Sukuna crooning in his head about hitting their heads, snapping their necks - severing the brain/body connection. Desperately, Yuuji is forced to listen.

It works.

It is the only thing that works. Blood soaked fingers grip around neck after neck, each one snapping with barely a hint of Yuuji's strength. The people gurgle, gasping moans as their eyes still twitch towards him, completely oblivious to their broken states.

Eventually, Yuuji has stopped twenty four people, each of them on the floor around him. He is the only one standing in the mall now and it only takes one heaving breath to smell the blood and innards before Yuuji twists his head to the side, vomiting in a disgusting spray of stomach contents, splattering noisily onto the mess of the mall floor. There is a lot of blood mixed in, Yuuji focusing on the thick clots.

He needs to call a hospital for all these people, Yuuji thinks sluggishly. They need help. There is a lot of blood. And blood should be on the inside.

Sukuna cackles as Yuuji palms his phone. His shaking, blood drenched fingers skitter off the screen, and he hastily finds a clean corner of his hoodie to wipe the screen, trying again. The emergency line rings to life - finally.

It beeps twice, call dropping into nothing.

Yuuji blinks down at the screen. He looks around at the people stuck on the ground, broken apart by Yuuji's hands and... and he should leave. Find help. Find... find food maybe. He is hungry after all that effort.

Yuuji's stomach grumbles and his teeth ache. His hands shake more and more, his whole spine trembling as he shuffles forward, room spinning.

The sun is bright as he exits the mall. He hears screams and car alarms in a distorted way, like he is swimming underwater. Yuuji remembers the last time he went to a hot springs, so long ago. He would find the cool pool to swim around, hanging out at the very bottom for as long as he could, until his lungs burned and his vision spotted. He would

stay there shivering until the attendants scolded him and then he would sit in the burning hot water, steam filling his nose instead, making it just as hard to breath.

Yuuji feels hot now too, his skin steaming under his clothes. Someone is crying, he thinks. It is climate change - baking the whole world inside out. Yuuji feels like bread rising, chemical reactions under heat.

But nothing out here tries to eat Yuuji. People stumble past him, ignoring his sweltering form.

He sees movement out of the corner of his eye and he slowly blinks at it, wanting the shape to focus. It is a teenager. He smells untouched, no coagulated blood on his skin. The teenager has a lot of muscle on him, Yuuji can tell. His body fits his clothes even as he huddles in a ball stinking of terror, hidden mostly behind a trash can. Yuuji unthinkingly takes steps forward, moving towards the guy - he smells good. So good compared to the blood and vomit coating Yuuji.

The teen catches Yuuji's eye and his face goes pale, tears welling up in his big brown eyes. A sob escapes his lips as he scrambles further back into the wall - completely trapped with nowhere to run.

Yuuji feels the thought float in his head. The thought that this teen is afraid of him. No one else on the street is afraid of him. No one else on the street has caught the glimpse of the teen either.

Drool splatters out of Yuuji's mouth, wetting his chin. Easy prey.

Something wiggles in the trash can, the exoskeleton of a curse forming in broad daylight. Yuuji growls, instincts overriding his hunger and he jumps to the trash can, fist strangling the curse into dust.

The teen cries, hands pressed over his mouth.

Yuuji blinks. He feels hot, still. He takes his hoodie off, peeling the bloody mess away from where it sticks to his body. Mind still sluggish, Yuuji hands it to the teen. Words don't seem to want to form in his mouth, his tongue as heavy and slow as his brain - but.

But no one is looking at them. If they see the teen boy - if they smell him like Yuuji can smell him... then, like the curse feeding off of the teen's terror, they will try to bite and eat him too.

Yuuji knows it. He doesn't get it but he sees a group eating something twenty meters from his left. It does not look like fast food.

The teen doesn't move even as Yuuji shakes his clothing at him.

Yuuji still needs to go. The hoodie drops with a wet splat on the boy's shaking knees. Yuuji turns on his heel to head ... away. Somewhere.

He is famished.

The streets are busy. No one looks at him. Some food runs and Yuuji resists the urge to chase the prey, to join the horde ambling after it. He sees a lot of curses, way too many for the midday walk. It is soothing to destroy them, each successful exorcism cheering him up, filling the hole in his stomach.

The busy streets turn into a quiet, well worn path. Yuuji is hungry. There is food at the school. Food he can stomach to eat. Something fresh. Something warm. Something that he can eat, tasting so good, so meaty and bloody and thick - thick to sharpen his teeth on, gnawing like a dog on muscle and sinew and fat, fleshy bits and squishy bits and so much of it that his stomach will get round and big and he will keep eating it and eating it and eating it, biting ripping sucking drinking.

Yuuji blinks back the fever, suddenly staring at the walls to his school. The sun is lower in the sky. It is dinner time.

"Ah, the last student to arrive back." A voice rings out, stealing Yuuji's focus. The thing that sizzles through his brain is the smell of ozone. It makes his nose curl in distaste. No good. Not good to bite into, after all.

Footsteps brings the man - brings Gojo-sensei closer. He is on guard, Yuuji thinks. The school looks impenetrable, domain wrapping around it like a baby blanket.

Gojo lifts his blindfold, eyes glinting. The hunger inside him recedes like the tide. Yuuji tries to form a word of greeting. His tongue lolls about, thick and useless behind his teeth.

"Did you get bit?"

Yuuji's voice isn't the one that answers. Sukuna rips open his cheek, stretching his skin and facial structure into a charade of a demonic mouth.

"My vessel did, unfortunately. Multiple times. He is hardly alive now, hanging on by a thread." Sukuna's dark voice rumbles through Yuuji's

head. It sounds bad, his words. Yuuji doesn't feel too bad - just... just confused. His wounds don't hurt. His throat aches, his teeth crave flesh, his mind skittering slowly between the urges, unaware of anything other than his own mouth and the distance to Gojo-sensei.

Gojo-sensei doesn't smile, barely moving his face. "Can you stop the infection?"

Sukuna laughs. "This paltry plague is nothing. The question is... what will you give me in return?"

At this, Gojo chuckles. "I have nothing to give you. Either you heal him or his body gets sealed. This... plague has too many unknowns at this point for me to bargain. Best to let him die instead of infecting others."

Sukuna huffs, rage boiling through Yuuji's sternum. It passes quickly, sweeping through his body like ice, leaving his spine shivering.

"Fine... I have no want to be a spectator to this inelegant hunger anyways. But if I were you, sorcerer, I'd start to think of bargaining chips now. I have a feeling you'll be begging on your knees for my salvation."

There is a pop of pressure in Yuuji's ears followed swiftly by an agonizing shatter in his mind, glass braking behind his eyes. His stomach cramps, muscles spasming as he loses control, falling to his knees as bile and blood explode from his mouth. The bites forgotten on his shoulders and arms and legs all start to sizzle, boils building and bursting in the same breath. Tears and snot weep out of Yuuji's face as he sobs at the pain, the torture.

And then he takes a deep breath, oxygen filling his lungs and moving through his circulatory system, kickstarting his heart into an even beat. The glaze that had settled over his vision fades away.

"Oh," Yuuji exhales, alive. "Well, fuck. That sucked."

Gojo-sensei beams at him. "Welcome back, Yuuji-kun! No more letting people bite you, 'kay?"

"I didn't - not on purpose!" Yuuji says indignant. "They wouldn't stop. What's happening out there, sensei?"

"The apocalypse!" Gojo-sensei replies, still beaming. "Hurry along inside, Shoko will double check your infection levels and clear you for

mingling with your fellow students.”

Yuuji picks himself up off the ground, avoiding the pile of grossness he expelled as he steps through the part of the barrier Gojo-sensei pries open. Yuuji is bombarded immediately by the doctor, who is fully suited in a hazmat outfit.

She sprays Yuuji down in a harsh jet of ice cold water mixed with some burning chemical. He is told to strip naked right there, only a flimsy privacy curtain separating them from the open air of the courtyard.

Yuuji bears with the inspection, letting her verify that he has no open wounds, explaining how he was bit but Sukuna healed him. As he dresses in clean scrubs, he gives her a full list of the bite symptoms. Shoko stoically writes everything down, humming.

“Alright, Itadori. You survived another bout with death, congratulations. If you feel any urge to eat someone, do us all a favour and let us know so we can kill you right away.”

“Thanks, doc!” Yuuji smiles. “Everyone else back safely?”

“Your friends are out on the field, I think.”

Yuuji waves at her, hurrying into a jog. He wants to know what’s going on. He needs to talk to Fushiguro and Kugisaki.

And. There they are. No one is in uniform, each wearing scrubs like Yuuji and looking just as freshly washed. Everyone is kind of keeping their distance from one another, Panda and Inumaki sitting high on the steps while Maki, Kugisaki and Fushiguro are each spread out on the lower steps. As one, they turn to watch Yuuji step towards them.

He waves, carelessly.

“So, I died again, I think.” Yuuji says.

Fushiguro runs his hands through his wet hair, sighly loudly.

Kugisaki rolls her eyes. “You got bit?”

“Yup,” Yuuji says, popping the ‘p’. “Anyone want to fill me in on what’s going on? I was pretty out of it until Sukuna healed me.”

Maki fixes her ponytail, blandly starting to talk. “All communications are down and electricity is fluctuating so things are pretty scattered.

But it is some kind of infectious disease. The people who get it will keep moving even when they should be dead, and try and eat or bite at the people around them.”

“The higher ups were communicating with the other schools and sorcerers up until an hour ago when the lines started to drop.” Panda continues. “They want everyone to gather together and shelter in place. Curses are sprouting up everywhere. And it looks like the infection is spreading fast.”

Yuuji sits down with a huff on the grassy ground. “Yeah, I don’t remember much after going into the mall. But... there wasn’t too many people alive on my way here in the streets.”

Fushiguro stares at Yuuji. “Did you eat anyone?”

Yuuji shivers. “I don’t think so. And the other.. infected - they didn’t bother me, once I got confused. I could smell them, I know that.”

“This sucks,” Kugisaki groans. “Things just have to go to shit, huh.”

Inumaki hums in agreement.

“Anyone we know that is... yanno, infected?” Maki asks.

The group looks at one another.

“I don’t think we’ve heard from all the clans, or got an updated head count from Kyoto.” Panda says softly. “But I think it is likely lots of people are dead or infected by now.”

“The teachers are setting up and taking stock of the supplies.” Fushiguro says. “We are probably going to be stuck here for a little while. Hospitals are overrun and the stores are too dangerous right now.”

Yuuji blinks at Fushiguro. “You were visiting your sister today, right? Is she okay?”

Fushiguro nods. “Yeah, she is set up in one of the medical beds here.”

That’s good, Yuuji thinks. One less person to worry about.

The group trails off into silence and the hours pass. No one talks much, everyone trapped in their own worries, own concerns about what was witnessed and experienced, the worries for the future.

Yuuji refuses to eat dinner, stomach twisting at the thought of his previous hunger. Eventually, they all head to sleep in their various dorm rooms, the adults conspicuously absent.

The morning sun rises with a red sky. Fires and smoke trail up from various parts of the city. There is very little sound. No birds chirp. Silence rings.

Gojo-sensei doesn't smile as he greets everyone.

"Alright, students. There has been no communications from civilians or other sorcerers in hours. In order to get more information, the decision is to send out scoping teams back into the city, to try and regain contact with other sorcerers. I have a list here and I will be transporting each group to the last known location of the targets."

Gojo stretches up tall, voice light and airy with renewed brevity. "Don't get bit!"

Maki and Nobara are paired together to go to the Kyoto school. Inumaki and Panda are to search for the missing third-years. Yuuji and Fushiguro will head to Nanami's apartment block. Gojo-sensei will be rounding up information from various clans, teleporting back and forth as needed.

Yuuji wipes his sweaty palms on his pants, shaking out his limbs in anticipation for what they could be walking into. He hopes Nanami is okay. The older man is smart and strong - but the horde of infected is something else.

Fushiguro seems unbothered standing next to Yuuji as Gojo grabs them both by the shoulders, warping them with a stomach lurching twist of space. They end up on the top of a building.

The air stinks, wind blowing the smell of garbage, blood and innards right up to where they stand.

Gojo leans down to look them both in the eyes. "Do not get bit. Here are some face masks to protect you from any other means of disease transfer." He hands over thick, white disposable masks. "Kill any

infected to protect your lives and lives of anyone still healthy. Regroup on the top of this building, hopefully with any survivors you find. Priority is to Nanami and any sorcerers.”

Yuuji nods. “Okay, sensei.”

Gojo’s eyes trace over them both before clapping his hands one more time and then bends over to grab an abandoned crowbar from the roof floor. He hands it over to Yuuji with a cheeky grin and disappears promptly.

The two teens put their masks on, Yuuji checking the weight and range of his new weapon. Fushiguro brings up his divine dogs.

Nanami is on the third floor of the seven story block. With a look and a nod, Yuuji opens the roof door to see the thin, narrow stair case down into the building. No sounds carry up to them. Slowly, quietly, the two start to make their way down.

“Should we clear each floor as we go?” Yuuji asks as they near the seventh floor door.

Fushiguro eyebrows clinch down in thought. “Yes. We should keep our escape route up open and free of surprises.”

The door opens on the seventh floor to an empty hallway with six unique doors. Yuuji and Fushiguro split up, Yuuji leaning over to listen at one door while Fushiguro checks the other. Yuuji hears nothing from the other side and wiggles the door handle. It is locked. Nothing moves.

The second door is the same, and so is the third and forth. On the fifth door the handle turns unlocked.

Yuuji looks to Fushiguro and together they enter the open apartment. With some relief, it is completely empty. They exit it again and Fushiguro takes out a big red marker, writing on the door.

‘Unlocked, no dead’

The sixth floor is similar - four locked doors and two empty apartments. There is a cat meowing behind one door and it breaks Yuuji’s heart to leave it there. Fushiguro rolls his eyes but does not stop Yuuji from breaking open the door to spill out all the cat food into various bowls. It is nice to take a break and pet the soft, fluffy creature. It eats a bunch of food and then curls back up on the couch,

unwilling to leave the safe scents of home.

They leave the door open, hoping the cat can survive while its owner is missing. Yuuji hopes the people in the picture frames all over the apartment make it home one day.

Reaching the fifth floor is when things get interesting. Yuuji hears it, can smell it too as soon as they walk in from the staircase. Fushiguro tenses beside him, fingers at the ready. All the doors in the hallway are closed.

The first door is locked and not the source of the smell. Yuuji can hear something rustling behind it though, like someone trying to stay silent but who isn't very good at it.

"Hello," Yuuji whispers out. "You alive?"

The rustle stops. A small voice whispers from behind the door. "You bit?"

"No. I think someone on this floor was though. How many in your place?"

"Just me." The voice responds, sadly.

"Okay. Hang tight while we clear this, okay? Keep your door locked and stay silent until you get the all clear."

Fushiguro is already checking the other doors methodically. He stops at the fourth one, raising his hand as something loudly bangs behind it. An inhuman groan raises the hair on Yuuji's arms, his mouth going dry instantly. Fushiguro and him share a glance, already taking their places.

The door is locked.

But they can't leave an infected on the same floor as someone who is still alive, still untouched. It might break free, or someone else comes around, comes home with the key unknowingly and lets the illness spread further.

Fushiguro breaks the lock and Yuuji lunges forward, the crowbar hitting the skull of the person who stumbles out of the apartment. In the glance Yuuji takes before the head splits open he can see the glazed, sightless eyes of a middle aged man, skin bloody and fingers destroyed, nails peeling back. Behind him is a mess of an apartment,

the remains of another person in a long dress eaten down until the ribcage is glistening in the entry way.

The infected person is a crumbled heap. Yuuji pokes the body a few times, waiting for any sign of life or aggression. When none comes, Fushiguro steps over him, heading further into the destroyed apartment. Things are knocked over everywhere, blood on the walls.

Otherwise, it is empty. Fushiguro grabs a bag sitting on the counter, filling it with the food from the cupboards.

“What are you doing?” Yuuji asks curiously.

“Grab the stuff from the medicine cabinet.” Fushiguro commands, hands filled with boxes of goods. “We should close up this apartment and give this stuff to the other survivor.”

Yuuji blinks at the good idea and does what Fushiguro said to do, emptying the apartment of its first aid supplies and soap. Together they fill five shopping bags of items. When Yuuji closes the door to the place, he borrows a pen from Fushiguro and adds his note to the door.

‘Dead inside, supplies taken.’

One other apartment is empty and unlocked, and the rest are quiet.

Yuuji knocks on the apartment door where the person is. “Hey, the infected is taken care of. We’ve have their stuff for you, if you want it.”

The door hesitantly unlocks and an older man appears, his face unshaven and eyes wet. “Thank you - what is happening?”

Fushiguro explains the disease and how they are clearing the apartment buildings top to bottom.

“Stay here,” Yuuji adds firmly. “Upper floors are fine now and this should last you a while. It isn’t safe outside right now.”

“My .. my brother went to the shop yesterday and hasn’t come back yet.”

Yuuji winces as Fushiguro looks away.

“Eh, he might be okay?” Yuuji awkwardly pats his own hair, conscious of that likelihood. “Just, don’t go looking for him. Stay safe, okay? We are going down to the lower floors now, so lock your door behind

us.”

Fushiguro sighs loudly as they move down the staircase. “This is tedious. What if Nanami isn’t in his apartment?”

Yuuji shrugs, swinging his crowbar around as they walk. “If he isn’t in his apartment then he is making his way to the school.” Yuuji doesn’t voice the third option.

“I guess,” Fushiguro grumbles. “And we will have a second, infection free place as a backup.”

The fourth floor is more macabre, sadly. No one is alive, with five infected feeding on someone or more ripped apart in an opened apartment. It is hard to tell. The infected don’t put up much of a fight, easily disposed of by Yuuji’s sure swings and Fushiguro’s divine dogs snapping their necks. The closed apartment doors have more infected in them, more dead bodies too.

They don’t bother to write on the individual doors, Fushiguro simply writes on the staircase what is on the other side, filling floor four with dead bodies only. The stench of rot will most probably keep most people away, anyways.

The third floor should have Nanami.

A trail of infected bodies lines the hallway.

The door that they know is his opens up easily, no noises.

Yuuji does indeed find him.

He takes a moment, tears springing up his eyes and falling down his cheeks. Fushiguro swears in the background but Yuuji doesn’t pay attention to it, too focused on the breaking of his own heart and the familiar feeling of absolute helplessness hitting him hard in the gut.

Nanami’s body swings from the ceiling. His belt is wrapped around his purple and snapped neck, in sharp contrast with his nearly pristine suit.

Nearly pristine, with the exception of the obvious bite. Half his forearm is bare, fabric torn away and mixed in with the fleshy wound.

Fushiguro grabs Yuuji, pulling him in. Fushiguro is not someone who touches people casually, yet he manhandles Yuuji into looking away from Nanami, forcing his head down into Fushiguro’s shoulder. Yuuji

gratefully clutches to him, hanging on, fingers digging in deep as the sob rushes out.

Fuck, Nanami. The signs of battle are everywhere. He must have killed so many and yet with this illness all it takes is one wrong move, one bite and it is game over.

And Nanami fell on his own sword rather than become sick.

God. They will have to break the news to Gojo. Yuuji aches, his stomach dropping in grief.

“Let’s get him down from there.” Fushiguro suggests, not pushing Yuuji away.

Yuuji squeezes his eyes shut, breathing deep. He reluctantly loosens his grip and steps away, clear headed as he looks up at Nanami’s body. “Yeah.”

Together they carefully lift him free, resting him on his bed. Yuuji takes his glasses, putting them on Nanami’s side table, as if he is going to wake up and put them on again. But. He is dead. Dead like so many others in Yuuji’s life. At least this time... at least this time it can’t be blamed on Yuuji.

Leaving him there, closing the door behind them and writing the status on floor is strange. Yuuji doesn’t know if it is right to just leave him, leave everything as is. He lingers as long as he dares, staring crushed at the closed door to the third floor. Fushiguro says nothing, standing silently as Yuuji hesitates.

But they need to move. Gojo will be coming back for them eventually.

The rest of the building is empty of living people. The infected fall easily beneath Yuuji’s crowbar and so does the hidden curse, lurking right by the front door. There is no satisfaction to be had as the curse is destroyed by Fushiguro’s divine dogs in seconds.

With easy agreement, neither Fushiguro or Yuuji exit the building. They walk up the seven flights of stairs and rest on the roof. Seven stories high, six apartments each and only one living person in the whole building is left unharmed.

The streets are full of stumbling figures.

Fushiguro, stoic and logical, hides his head in his hands.

Despair chokes Yuuji.

"Hush, sweet vessel." Sukuna croons to him with a twisted rapture in his deep voice. "This is just the beginning."

—

Drowned Rats

Chapter Summary

Gojo tries to be everything for everyone. Infections kill those they know and many more they don't.

Yuuji makes a choice.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Gojo is solemn when he picks them up. His expression does not change as Yuuji haltingly tells him of Nanami's death.

Gojo claps him on the back, the pressure firm and steady. "Thank you, Yuuji-kun. Unfortunately, that is not the only bad news I've heard today."

Fushiguro frowns, eyes dark. "Who else?"

"The Kyoto school is overrun." Gojo says bluntly. "We arrived too late. Todo was the first one bit, and as soon as he became infected - well. Maki had a chance to say goodbye to Mai at least."

Fushiguro stares at the ground before turning around and kicking hard at the wall in anger. "Shit. What about the rest of the clans?"

"Ah, unfortunately we are now hosting the Zenin clan and the survivors of the Kamo clan. In total, our little school now has over twenty guests!" Gojo stretches, no sign of strain on his face. "But, let's hurry you two home. I still need to check on the other second and third years."

Without preamble for the second time that day, Yuuji is squeezed through infinity, reappearing back at the school.

Together Fushiguro and Yuuji walk to find Kugisaki as Gojo disappears again. She is exactly where they expected her, furiously scrubbing at the dishes in the sink. Her washgloves shine with the

suds, the sponge squeaking against the ceramic of the plates. The whole kitchen is spotless, a sign of Kugisaki trying to work out whatever frustrations are burning inside.

“Yo,” Yuuji greets, picking up a towel to help dry, passing the clean dishes to Fushiguro to put away properly seamlessly.

Kugisaki glares with red rimmed eyes, cheeks blotchy as she rubs them. “Nanami?”

Yuuji shakes his head, staring at the water droplets on the plate getting soaked up by the towel.

“Shit.” Kugisaki groans, scrubbing harder. “We lost all of Kyoto. Only reason me and Maki didn’t die is cause fucking Gojo. Completely overrun with infected.”

“How is Maki?” Fushiguro asks quietly.

“Powerful.” Kugisaki says simply. “Mai did her best to take care of Maki, to the end. It’s fucked up.”

“Yeah, we only found one person alive.” Yuuji adds quietly. So much death in only a day, it feels surreal. “Where is Maki now?”

Kugisaki shrugs with a simple movement of her shoulders. The three worked in tandem, the clacks of dishes and splashes of water the only sound in the room. Eventually, the kitchen is clean.

“What’s the plan for food?” Fushiguro asks. “Have you heard from any of the elders? Gojo said there’s twenty here.”

“I’m not cooking for everyone.” Kugisaki declares.

Yuuji agrees. “Let’s leave the kitchen before someone tries to make us. We already did all the cleaning.”

“We?!” Kugisaki hits him. “You came in at the end!”

Fushiguro rolls his eyes but Yuuji feels a little lighter as they leave the peace of the kitchen. The world is completely fucked but dishes still need washing and food needs cooking. The adults, the real adults, can manage the food at least.

“I’m going to check on Tsumiki.” Fushiguro announces. Without saying much, Yuuji and Kugisaki flank him and walk towards the sick bay together.

The clinic is messy. The doctor isn't around but things seem to be out, piles and checklists in progress. Medicine spills haphazardly out of the cupboards, next to bandages and sterile gauzes. Bleach and other harsh disinfectants have the amounts inside hastily scribbled on the bottles with permanent black marker.

It looks like a lot of stuff yet it makes Yuuji nervous. He isn't one who thinks to the future, who plans in advance - but. This amount of stuff. With life as it is outside Gojo's barrier... is this the last of the factory provided medical supplies? Will they need to rob apartments and other buildings in order to supplement their own needs?

Fushiguro and Kugisaki also glance at the stockpile before they share small, little looks between them all. Yuuji sits on the chair, face drawn. Yeah. They are all thinking about it.

Yuuji peers curiously at the lady in the bed. Tsumiki looks deep in a peaceful rest, her face relaxed and hair nicely brushed out while her hands rest on top of the bed sheets. Yuuji hopes she stays asleep just a little bit longer, long enough for Gojo to find some sort of solution, some sort of future out of this rampant infection.

Sukuna whispers in his head, "do you think Gojo is going to save this world? Curses and sick, dead humans are two different things. He cannot save the dead. He cannot save you."

Yuuji doesn't reply, refusing to engage with Sukuna. He can feel the demon pushing against his mind, dread and helplessness running through his veins, manipulated by Sukuna whims. With practiced ease, Yuuji shakes it off, willfully ignoring him.

"So, what now?" Kugisaki speaks up, lounging on the free bed. "Do you think we will be tasked out to get rid of all the curses? I know there's lots of them out there now. Will the curses all die off when humanity is finished?"

"Probably," Fushiguro frowns down at his sister. "The infected are easy to stop. But the curses will probably grow stronger the bleaker the future looks to civilians."

"What civilians? Everyone is probably dead." Kugisaki snorts, turning away from them. Her voice is harsh - what she saw in Kyoto probably didn't leave her with the best memories. Those were people she knew. That Yuuji knew. Dead now or lost to them in other ways.

Yuuji swallows down the lump in his throat, thinking of the old man

in the apartment, blinking away the vision of Nanami's swinging feet.

"Not everyone is dead. Some people found safety, like we did." Yuuji says, trying for a smile. The other two don't even glance at him.

"Sure, Itadori." Fushiguro says, lightly touching his sister's still hand.

They sit there for a while, no one wanting to get up and leave the others, no one wanting to be alone.

Yuuji hears it first, his head tilting to the door as he stands up off the chair. There is some kind of rush towards the clinic, a stampede of footsteps. Fushiguro and Kugisaki follow Yuuji's lead as he settles into a protective stance as the shouts grow louder.

The door slams open but Yuuji does not rush to attack, the sight of Ieiri-sensei and Gojo-sensei causing his muscles to relax instantly. In between them is a burly man, an older teen with purple hair and split eyebrows. His fists are bloody, his whole body is bloody - but the sight of the girl in his arms, pale as a ghost is what really makes Yuuji freeze.

"Move," the doctor shouts at Kugisaki who hurries away from the empty bed.

The girl is gently laid there by the man as Ieiri works around him. The man clutches her one arm, face grim and set.

One arm. Because the other, the probable source of the blood, is cleanly sliced off, missing from the shoulder down. She is pale, her piercings stark against her chin as her mouth moves, mindlessly saying something too quiet for a horrified Yuuji to hear.

"Hakari-senpai," Fushiguro tells Kugisaki and Yuuji, nodding to the back of the man's head.

The three of them settle on the other side of Tsumiki's bed now, giving the doctor enough room to work. Gojo sensei is at the door, face unreadable. No one tells them to move, to leave, so they don't - watching as the doctor stabilizes and stops the bleed.

"Who's the girl?" Kugisaki asks in an undertone.

"I think that is Hoshi Kirara - they left the school together. That's the group that Panda and Inumaki went to get."

“Shit, do you think it was as bad as Kyoto?” Yuuji says.

Gojo is staring transfixed at the patient as he answers. “Not as bad, no. Hakari has great instincts and they were holed up in a safe place with a bunch of their civilian contacts. They actually arranged rescue of the second years when they got cornered in a tricky spot. It wasn’t until I came to gather them here that we ran into issues.”

Hakari glances at them, looking away from Hoshi for the first. “One of the sick got lucky and busted through the window. Kirara managed to repel it from the second years and civilians, but it bit her arm.”

“This is an experiment to see if cutting the infected flesh off fast enough will prevent it from spreading.” The doctor huffs, her gloved hand sliding through the mess of the arm.

“Roll the dice.” Hakari says with a bloodless grin. He turns back to Hoshi, whispering something to her as she twitches.

Yuuji can’t look away, not from the blood, from the paleness of the girl, from the sure grip Hakari has on her, the careful strokes meant to sooth her as she drifts in and out of awareness. Time passes in a long, drawn out way - and then the doctor is relaxing, cracking her back. Hoshi has her eyes closed, chest moving slightly.

“Well, the bleeding is stopped. We need to monitor for infection but the immediate cause of death is stemmed.” Ieiri reports.

“Thanks, doc.” Hakari grunts out, running a careless hand through his hair. He gently places the girl’s remaining hand down on the bed before standing up.

And then the next thing they know Hakari’s fist is in the air, swinging right for Gojo’s face.

“Fuck you!” He howls as Gojo dodges. “What the fuck is wrong with you?”

Gojo doesn’t say anything, frown deep on his face. Still, he moves out of the way, not letting Hakari’s fists hit.

“You absolute asshole. Just fucking barging into where you don’t belong. Now what the hell am I gonna do about Kirara? About the people we abandoned in that blood soaked store?”

“I was trying to save you,” Gojo says morosely, not fighting back. “It’s

been a very stressful few days.”

“Stressful? You can’t get bit, what the fuck. You’ve been holed up here with the other old assholes, completely safe from the goddamn death and destruction of the whole world. Every single person is in danger. Not just civilians.”

Hakari shakes out his fists, stretching his large shoulders back. “Fuck this shit. I’m gonna go see the second years, get me when Kirara wakes up.”

Gojo watches him stalk away, the first years standing silently. With an unreadable face, Gojo moves away from the door. “Call me if you need me, Shoko-chan!”

And then he is gone too.

The doctor sighs, staring sadly at the bloody trail on her floor. She looks up at the group with a sharp smile. “I’ll give you one package of mochi that I have hidden in my desk if you lot clean up the mess.”

Yuuji and Kugisaki’s eyes sparkly, mood switching on a dime for the promise of sweets. “Yes, ma’am!”

The doctor cleans up Hoshi’s bed, carefully moving the bloody sheets into a bucket marked as toxic. The first years put on their own gloves and carefully portion out the disinfectant cleaner. Between the three of them, it doesn’t take long to make the floor sparkle again.

The sun has started to set, the light shifting through the high up windows.

“Must be near dinner,” Kugisaki hums, reading Yuuji’s mind. “Should we go see if they’ve sorted that out yet?”

Fushiguro looks at the doctor. “Are you okay here on your own?”

She waves a hand at them, clipboard open as she re-shelves the medicine, each noted on her piece of paper. “Yup, I’ll be fine. If Kirara wakes up, I’ll holler for Gojo.”

The three leave the clinic. There is food - simple stew and bread. Not nearly the usual portions, each bowl pre-made. It still fills the hole in Yuuji’s stomach and it is nice to slide into the bench across from Maki, the other second years flanking her. Hakari sits on the edge of the table, ignoring the glares from the random elder. Fushiguro and

Kugisaki join them too until the students are all eating diligently, if silently.

“You’re Sukuna’s vessel?” Hakari asks suddenly, his eyes intense on Yuuji.

Yuuji nods, dipping his bread in the left behind stew sauce, sure to get all of it. There’s no follow up questions. Sukuna lazily shifts inside of him but doesn’t add anything to the stilted conversation.

Kugisaki and Maki take off together, Kugisaki saying something about getting to the baths first. Fushiguro gathers their dirty dishes, quietly slipping down the hall to his own room after dropping them off in the dish bucket. Yuuji isn’t tired yet, doesn’t want to be alone, not after the past few days.

Inumaki is silent as always but Panda reaches over and ruffles Yuuji’s hair with a big heavy paw. “We are going to visit Kirara and then maybe play a few quiet games afterwards. Did you want to join us?”

Yuuji beams at him, happy to be involved. “Thanks!”

Hakari swings his big arm around Yuuji’s shoulders, friendly like. “Panda’s told me a lot about you. I think we will get along great.” The man laughs in his ear and Yuuji feels charmed just a little bit.

“I know nothing about you, sorry!” Yuuji says point blank.

“Ah, that’s okay. I’m sure we will have plenty of time to get to know each other. Til the end of the world, probably.” Hakari chuckles as Inumaki sighs, Panda shushing him.

Yuuji laughs too, happy someone else is on his same wavelength and open about it. It is easy to like Hakari. He moves with them, strength and confidence in every stride. It is a nice camaraderie, Hakari asking smooth questions and carrying the conversation as they walk.

And then they turn the final corner towards the clinic. Yuuji shivers, goosebumps immediately spreading over his arms, the hair on his neck standing tall. Yuuji pauses, Hakari pausing with him. The door is closed to the clinic.

The door is closed. Something thumps behind it.

Yuuji’s stomach drops. Panda sniffs the air, a low growl rumbling from his chest, a hint of whine with it. Inumaki reaches out, grabbing

Hakari's arm, fingers white. Yuuji looks hesitantly back at Hakari to find the man blank faced, still as a statue.

"I smell blood." Panda's voice breaks. "From the surgery, maybe?"

Yuuji shakes his head. "No, we cleaned it up. I think... I think we should get Gojo."

"Why," Hakari says, voice even. "Why do we need Gojo? We all know. We know what the bite does. It was a risk to bring Kirara back here."

"She might still be okay." Panda pleads. "We - we are just overreacting."

"Salmon." Inumaki disagrees. They can all feel it, after all. The dread. The strange noise. The door that should be open - closed.

"The doctor... did she, did she close the door? To give Kirara privacy?" Panda mumbles.

But Kirara isn't the only patient.

"Fuck." Yuuji closes his eyes. "Tsumiki... Tsumiki is defenceless."

"Fushiguro's sister?" Hakari says, still blank. "Fuck indeed."

Yuuji steps forward. "Let me check first."

"No way am I sending you." Hakari finally has a bit of heat back in his voice. "If... if shits gone wrong, I ain't having you on my conscious too."

"Ah, the bites... don't take on me, 'cuz of Sukuna."

Hakari frowns. "And if they are infected? Can you kill them?"

Yuuji grimaces. So far all the infected he has taken down have been strangers. But...

"Isn't your girlfriend in there? Can you kill her?"

"I'll get Gojo," Panda says decisively, turning on his heels and running.

Inumaki quietly walks towards the door, his ear against the wall. Hakari and Yuuji watch him like hawks. The other boy crouches down, listening intently.

It's a shock and surprise when bloody fingertips dart from under the door, seeking freedom. Inumaki hastily steps back. Yuuji grips Hakari hard, holding him back from running forward.

Hakari breathes out wetly. "Those aren't Kirara's nails."

Yuuji wants to ask how he knows - but. They are clean, trim and no paint. And it's a set, a pair of hands. Kirara lost her whole arm.

Gojo appears fast, leaning next to Inumaki right by the door. His hair gleams as he keeps his back to Yuuji and Hakari, shoo-ing Inumaki towards them with a wave of his hand. Inumaki hesitantly joins the other students, hand fiddling with his zipper, eyes focused on the door.

"It might be best to look away, Hakari-kun, Yuuji-kun." Gojo does not face them. His hand lifts up his blindfold, Yuuji watching the stretch of black fabric as it is removed from his teacher's head.

Yuuji doesn't listen and neither does Hakari. He has to know for sure what happened. His imagination might be worse than reality... or it could add to his never-ending nightmares. Either way, he can't bring himself to look away.

"Shut up, old man. What else is there to do." Hakari says.

Gojo slides the door open.

Tsumiki is on the floor, atrophied limbs unable to hold her weight. Her eyes are unseeing, milky and blank as her nails scramble on the tile, trying to shuffle forward. The weight of Shoko Ieiri must not help, the remains of the doctor scrambling over the girl and a cart - a cart that must have been used to barricade them in, blocking access to the door handle from inside.

The doctor has a mass of bites on her arms, her hand missing fingers as it reaches out for Gojo's face.

Gojo jumps behind the lunging infected and snaps Ieiri's neck with a quick twist, no hesitation found in his bright eyes. The doctor's body falls instantly, Gojo carefully cradling his friend, slowing the descent until he rests her against the wall.

Tsumiki makes it over the threshold, weak inhuman noises falling from her wide open mouth. Yuuji's heart clenches and he closes his eyes tightly as Gojo moves to the girl, keeping her head safely away

from his body as he gently lifts her from the cold, hard ground.

Behind his eyelids, the harsh spring of tears burn as a second loud snap echos in the deathly quiet hall.

“Kirara?” Hakari asks softly.

Yuuji blinks his eyes open, seeing Gojo carefully cradle a dead Tsumiki and blocking the view of the inside of the medical room. Gojo doesn't move, eyes sparkling as he stares at her still face.

Hakari shuffles forward, not touching Gojo and Tsumiki as he moves into the room.

Inumaki leans into Yuuji, a soft line of warm heat. They stand in the hallway like guards as Gojo and Hakari grieve, the sounds of sobs from the medical room a stark contrast to Gojo's statuesque face.

“I'll break the news to Fushiguro. The two of you should get some sleep.” Gojo says quietly, leaving no room for arguing.

Hakari doesn't come out before Yuuji and Inumaki turn away.

Inumaki walks with Yuuji all the way to his room, a silent spectator at his side - even though Yuuji knows Inumaki will have to backtrack and go another route to his own dorm. The support is appreciated and Yuuji says so as they reach his door. Inumaki nods to him and goes on his own way, his eyes so expressively sad.

Yuuji feels rundown and worn out. Life has gone to shit. He doesn't bother to wash his face or teeth as he shucks off his clothes, settling under the covers, hiding his head from the world.

It is too easy to fall asleep.

The dream world is a haze of blood red fog, wild dogs screaming and lumbering shadows chasing him, teeth snapping at his heels. Sukuna is there, Yuuji knows - and he heads for him. Yuuji aches for the familiar visions of guts and torture. Yuuji runs and runs and runs and the danger never passes. Sukuna's shrewd grin cuts through the fog - a promise of pain, of suffering and chains.

Yuuji runs to it with arms open, the spikes ripping through his skin nothing like the fear choking him.

The sun is barely risen when Yuuji slips out of bed again, Sukuna

darkly pleased.

Fushiguro does not appear at breakfast and Yuuji breaks the news about what happened to Tsumiki and the doctor and Kirara to an exhausted Kugisaki. Her eyes grow even darker, highlighting the deep bags already appearing on her face as she swears.

Some elders pass them by, not even sparing the two students a glance.

“What are we going to do?” Yuuji worries quietly. Kugisaki has no answer for him.

Under mutual agreement, they head outside to get some fresh air. Maki joins them with Panda and Inumaki. Fushiguro does not appear.

Hakari does, swaggering into the field. He has a backpack filled to the brim, zipper straining. Gojo is at his heels, gesticulating wildly as Hakari flat out ignores him. The whole group's attention swings, watching the pair cross with rapt attention.

Slowly, their words reach the group.

“Hakari, leaving here is suicide.” Gojo snaps, voice harsher than anything Yuuji has ever heard from the man. “I know dealing with authority is not your favourite thing to do, but we are putting in place plans. This is still early days. I want you safe while we figure everything out.”

Hakari rolls his eyes. “Fuck safety. No, seriously. Fuck it. I have one life to live and I’m not spending a single second more trapped here.”

“You will die out there. The whole country is overrun with infected.”

“Then I will go out fighting - snapping as many necks as I can.”

“That’s not ideal,” Gojo scolds. “This isn’t the life Kirara would want for you.”

“Fuck you, what the hell do you know what she would want for me?”

Yuuji feels for the guy. Hakari’s face is twisted in anger, his scowl cutting a mean line over his face.

And Gojo-sensei - his blindfold hides his eyes but his hair looks limp, greasy. There is a waxy sheen to his cheeks and deep wrinkles around his pinched mouth. Even his straight back and strong shoulders are slumping forward, weighted down. He looks exhausted.

Yuuji wants to do something to help him. Gojo does so much, all the time. And he has lost students to this plague, friends and coworkers too.

Fushiguro chooses that moment to stumble out of the building. His spiky hair is standing up every which way, his face pale and drawn. But his eyes burn, just as bright as Hakari.

“I want to leave too.” Fushiguro announces into the clearing.

“What?” Yuuji cries, shooting up to his feet. The others around him echo the sentiment, Kugisaki eyeing Fushiguro worriedly.

Gojo minutely changes his stance, shifting his feet as he turns to look at Fushiguro slowly and with a false sense of calm. “Why?”

“Gojo - I can’t.” Fushiguro’s voice is strained. “These walls aren’t... aren’t going to last forever. There is nothing holding me here.”

“I’m here. Your friends, your fellow students.” Gojo replies, gesturing to the group of onlookers. “You don’t even know Hakari.”

“But I know the Zenin clan.” Fushiguro counters. “Have they done anything since this has started?”

Gojo shrugs. “It’s only been a few days.”

Kugisaki speaks up now, her voice hard. “Is it going to get better? These last few days... I see what Fushiguro means. Can we do anything to stop this or are we just going to remain here, on the school grounds? No one is talking to us.”

“I’m not leaving,” Panda says. “I trust that Yagi has a plan.”

Inumaki nods in agreement with Panda.

Maki and Kugisaki share a loaded look. “I’m not saying I want to leave either - being in a crowd of those... those infected once was enough. We have supplies here. I don’t think splitting up solves anything.”

Gojo is solemn as he looks between Fushiguro and Hakari. “If you leave I can’t guarantee that I can come rescue you.”

Yuuji listens intently. There’s no... no good answer to this. Stay or go. Staying under Gojo’s umbrella of protection, under his complete untouchability. Be used as a tool for the elders, whatever their plan might be. Stuck, waiting in comfort for information. All with Sukuna

nipping at his heels, his death sentence still suspended.

Or go out into the remains of civilization. Find and rescue trapped people, killing curses with the freedom of making his own choices until the time comes.

“If Fushiguro leaves,” Sukuna whispers. “Follow him. I can help protect him.”

Yuuji blinks. “What?”

“I said what I said.” Sukuna’s voice is smug.

Yuuji doesn’t want to touch that with a ten-foot pole. But he doesn’t know Hakari. He knows the infected, how easy it is for them to be killed but how fast death hits if it spreads. Fushiguro can take care of himself but he shouldn’t have to do it all alone.

“Are you serious about leaving?” Yuuji asks Fushiguro.

Fushiguro’s intense eyes focus on Yuuji. He gives one firm nod and Yuuji’s heart twists, decision made.

Gojo looks at Yuuji and Yuuji can’t stop his sad smile spreading. “Sorry sensei. I’ll go with him, I think.”

The blindfold doesn’t twitch. After a moment, a loud sigh whistles through Gojo’s teeth. “Fine! I wash my hands of you all. I won’t hold you back. Even if I think it is suicide. Go. Go on then.” Gojo makes shoo-ing motions with his hands, turning around and leaving himself without another word. His shoulders are drawn up to his ears as he goes, his walk stiff.

“Ah,” Yuuji blinks, surprised and feeling a little bit taken aback. Gojo is gone though, already out of sight. “Okay. Give me five to pack my bag.”

He hurries to his room. There is not much to pack but he grabs his warmest clothes, filling up his bag with as many supplies that he can fit. The crowbar from Nanami’s apartment is smooth and comforting in his hand.

When he comes back, Fushiguro and Kugisaki are glaring at each other.

“You two are idiots,” she tells them. “I know it sucks to feel trapped

here but living in danger out there is worse.”

Fushiguro sighs. “I know. I don’t want to be here though. Out there... at least I am doing something.”

“The only thing you will be doing is dying.” Maki says bluntly. “You are not invincible. One bite is all it takes. And if they bite someone strong like Hakari - then it gets fucked up fast.”

“I am going to die.” Yuuji says as he joins them. “We all are, eventually.”

“You have weird survival instincts.” Kugisaki frowns.

Yuuji smiles, pushing into her casually with his shoulder. “Yeah, probably.”

“We will be safe. As safe as we can be.”

Hakari grunts at them. “I have a place all set up. We can go there to start, see if the others had any luck avoiding the infected after we left. You can come and go from that base, just help on supply runs and protection as needed.”

Yuuji realizes something. “Are we going to have to walk the whole way there?”

Hakari grins. “Yup! I’m not asking any favours now. It’s fine. Only a couple hours.”

Fushiguro raises his eyebrows. “A couple hours moving through hordes of infected.”

“No one is forcing you to go.” Hakari says sternly. “Right now you are in a safe haven. Where I’m going is not nearly as nice. Gojo has the right of it. Staying here is the better choice.”

Yuuji watches Fushiguro. The other teen’s face is in a hard line still. Yet, he nods, lifting up his pack. “I’m ready.”

Yuuji cracks his neck, holding out his fist for a friendly bump with Inumaki and Panda. “Bye guys. We will find a way to stay in touch.”

Kugisaki doesn’t do anything gross like hug them but she does lean forward into Yuuji’s space, squishing his cheeks together. “Don’t die.” Her eyes burn into his as Yuuji furiously nods.

“And you!” Kugisaki twists in Fushiguro’s direction. “Don’t take unnecessary risks.”

“Same to you,” Fushiguro replies.

And then they turn to leave, goodbyes done - straight and too the point. No need to linger, Yuuji figures. We will all live or die. Yuuji hopes this isn’t the last time he sees the school and his fellow students.

The trio walks out of Gojo’s barrier. There is no noticeable difference immediately. It takes about an hour or two into their walk before signs of turmoil appear. A corpse left rotting, unmoving. Then a hundred metres away, another one. Bones are all that remain, wrapped in torn clothing.

The air stinks. Garbage and litter is everywhere, pieces of cloth and plastic. It hasn’t rained in a few days and the heat of the summer is oppressive. The sun beats down on the dead, quickening the decomposition of whatever sinew still clings to their bones.

Occasionally there will be a far away noise, a thump and growl in the distance, but nothing crosses their paths. It is eerie. Hakari leads the way, his head on a swivel to constantly look for upcoming danger. Fushiguro stands in the middle as their most far range fighter, hands free and always at the ready. Yuuji takes the last position, eyes focused to make sure nothing sneaks up from behind.

The weather is pleasant even with the stressful walk. No one talks. And then the wild paths of the forest morph into the city streets. The smell from before is minimal compared to the source. Yuuji’s nostrils burn and his stomach turns, eyes watering uncontrollably.

Fushiguro turns to the side and vomits, gagging as quietly as possible.

The infected are everywhere. Puss and decay cover their wounds, the original bites. Their feet shuffle in or out of shoes, bodies bending forward to curl around their stomachs. Yuuji watches from their position behind a building as they carefully avoid touching each other, little tiny invisible boundaries almost keeping them from interacting.

Fushiguro taps Yuuji on his shoulder, pointing to the sky silently. Yuuji tilts his head in confusion. Fushiguro rolls his eyes.

Suddenly, Nue forms out of the alley way, the birds wingspan large. Oh heck yes, Fushiguro is going to let them fly. Yuuji wiggles with happiness, grinning wide. Fushiguro is so smart, this way they will not

have to fight their way to Hakari's base.

The bird seems disgruntled at the weight of Fushiguro, Yuuji and Hakari. Still, it lifts up into the air without complaint. The view from the sky is expansive. They can see the crowded streets, thousands strong. Piles of remains are everywhere, bodies left where they fell. Cars are stalled in place, bags fallen and garbage littering about, wind blowing the trash around. The city has never been so dirty, so unclean.

The roads grow more and more crowded as they fly east, Hakari quietly pointing out the roof of his base. It is a building attached to a carpark. Infected sway around it moving in strange patterns but the barriers made of wood and cardboard surrounding the windows and doors look unbroken.

Nue sets them down on the opposite roof.

"What's the plan now?" Yuuji asks.

Hakari grunts, stretching out and glancing up and down the full streets. "These fuckers are hanging around and I don't like it. I want to clear them out before trying to enter."

The infected snarl at each other below them, missing limbs and skin turning paper thin. They look weak, numbers in their favour. Yuuji stops counting at the twenty mark.

"More will come." Fushiguro points out to the open streets.

"Yeah, but see - they don't touch each other. If we can make a border of their dead bodies... it might keep others away."

Yuuji scrunches his nose. "Gross."

But Fushiguro nods in agreement with Hakari. "Might work. We need to plan how to do it so we don't get overrun."

"Will your bird be able to build the wall of dead? Just pick up the ones me and Itadori kill and start a pile?"

Yuuji swings his crowbar idly.

"Ready, vessel?" Sukuna smoothly cuts in. "You are about to kill as many humans as I did in all my years. I love to see it."

"Shut up," Yuuji hisses. "We can't leave them like that."

“No? You sure about that?” Sukuna laughs and disappears back away from Yuuji’s consciousness.

“Ready, Itadori?” Hakari cuts in.

Yuuji forces a smile to his face. “Yeah, let’s clear the street!”

“Nue will sweep down and grab you if things go south.” Fushiguro adds.

And then Hakari and Yuuji jump down, already snapping the necks of their chosen targets. It escalates fast. Yuuji kills three in quick succession before four of them realize he is alive and rush him. Their skulls cave in like butter under his crowbar, five more infected replacing them immediately.

Hakari is a whirlwind next to him, snapping spines and throwing the destroyed bodies at the other infected as weapons. Nue sweeps in and out, blocking one street with the steady pile of dead.

Adrenaline rushes through Yuuji’s system and he hardens his stomach against the gore, against the blank, pleading eyes of the infected, their mouths wide open in painful hunger. Some of them are small, young. Others have wrinkles - but they all swarm towards him and Hakari in wave after wave.

Sickened humans are so easy to kill. They don’t use any planning, driven by an urge to get close and bite down, no other thought or want obvious. Mindless. Humanity lost.

Yuuji’s stomach hurts too, his heart aching with every beat. A lady with a name tag still on, someone’s shining wedding ring, the middle school uniform. It is a tragedy, a huge loss of life - and Yuuji bashes his crowbar through them all, doing what ever he can to protect Hakari at his back, carving a path for the people in the building, for Fushiguro’s future.

A roar echoes behind them. The wall - half built - crumbles down in rolling bodies.

“Fuck!” Hakari swears, distractedly throwing a teenagers remains into five grappling infected.

The mood on the road drops. One thousand skinny legs crawl rapid fast, clinging to the walls and windows of the buildings as it scuttles towards them. The curse is huge, hundreds of yellow eyes blinking

disjointedly at them. Infected able behind it.

The divine dogs jump from the roof, jaws snapping at its legs. Every one ripped off shoots out a spray of vapour, thick and smelling like sulphur. The curse is strong, pulling from all the fears and sadness of the surviving humans, of the last coherent thoughts of the infected. The dogs struggle against it.

The infected themselves don't care about the curse. More and more of them aim for Yuuji and Hakari, forcing them back. They fight hard yet each infected killed is replaced nearly instantaneously with another one. More swarm.

Yuuji leaves fighting the curse to Fushiguro. He has to pay attention to the biting teeth in front of him. Smash, slash, bash. Hakari grunts as they move back to back.

The curse howls above them, the sun obscured.

Hopelessness burns. At least - at least Yuuji knows there are less infected now. He killed a lot, going by the bodies he is forced to step on, feet slipping.

Sukuna shakes Yuuji's brain, rattling his skull. "Useless human. Too much empathy in you. What is your purpose here? Why did you not stay under the umbrella of safety that man provided? Do you want to die?"

"Fuck you," Yuuji huffs, fingers losing grip on his weapon with how much blood is flowing down. "Doing this is better than doing nothing."

"This is not the only solution though."

"What - " Yuuji doesn't finish his sentence. He is exhausted. For a second, his concentration slips and Sukuna pulls.

It almost aches with how hard Yuuji's lungs expand, his stomach muscles clenching terribly. Yuuji feels himself drop back, free falling into his own body, Sukuna's throne hard and made of sharp bones. With a strange awareness, Yuuji feels Sukuna stretch his arms wide, fearless in front of the horde.

"Fuck," Yuuji screams. "Sukuna, you dick. Get out of here."

"Hush, vessel. I am going to help you."

The curse pops out of existence with a flick of Sukuna's finger.

Fushiguro screams Yuuji's name from above as Hakari swears, too busy punching an infected to do more as Sukuna twists around in a full circle, breathing in the death and rot deep.

An infected tries to bite him and -

Yuuji's head hurts. He can feel his body pushed to its limits as Sukuna uses him as a funnel, curse energy tingling his nerves painfully.

But the infected stops. And so does the one behind him, and the ones in front of Hakari. The sightless eyes grow wider as some remaining primal fear triggers and they try to shuffle back and away from the danger. Their uncoordinated limbs fall over the dead bodies, and they crawl, scrambling.

Sukuna shows no mercy. With a movement so fast it can't be seen, he cuts through the air slicing head after head off, dull thuds echoing as the bodies fall as one.

The street is clear and Sukuna howls with laughter, teeth wide and gleaming as he turns their body towards a stunned Hakari. Hakari doesn't even bother getting into a fighting stance. He shifts his weight, palms open.

Fushiguro drops down from the roof, eyes blazing. "Sukuna! What happened to Itadori?" Fushiguro's eyes Yuuji's bodily worriedly, looking for a killing blow.

Sukuna waves a careless hand. "He is fine. I have had a wonderful idea."

"What." Fushiguro and Hakari hold matching expressions of confusion.

"Yes!" Sukuna shows all his teeth, joy spreading through his body. Yuuji... Yuuji hasn't felt a happiness like this in a long time. His whole body feels warm and comforted, like he is wrapped in a thick blanket on a beautiful morning, full and all his needs met.

Yuuji has never had a feeling like this before. Pure contentment, all stemming from Sukuna. He sinks into the feeling more, helpless to the strange pleasure, the lack of pain.

Sukuna's voice rings out softly like a siren. "These humans... their

suffering is great. Dying, killing and waiting to be killed, all while filled with a hunger and thirst that never ends. I can kill them. All of them.”

“That sounds like mercy.” Hakari cuts in. “I’ve never heard of you being merciful.”

“Ha, I am not merciful, no. What I am is an opportunist. I will kill them. I will hunt and destroy them one by one until rivers of infected blood flood the streets. And I will be hailed as a king.”

“You are not going to be a king.” Fushiguro spits out. “You are Sukuna.”

“Oh,” Sukuna purrs. “Were you not watching the windows? I don’t think this is a sorcerer’s decision.”

The door to the building opens. Two wide eyed men, mouths hanging open shout for Hakari, staring out in amazement at the dead lining the street.

“Hakari!” They repeat. “You came back - and - and what happened? How did you kill them all?”

Sukuna steps forward right into the peoples space. Hakari and Fushiguro try to block Sukuna but they are effortlessly pushed to the side. Yuuji blinks awake from his daze, brain kickstarting. He can't let Sukuna run free.

“Sukuna,” Yuuji growls. “I won’t let you kill them!” And Yuuji pulls down harshly, forcing Sukuna to return.

“Shut up,” Sukuna rolls his eyes from his throne. “I won’t kill the clean. I need some people to worship me and Fushiguro is interesting. Hakari is good to deal with the rabble. I am not going to mindlessly kill everyone.”

“Then what do you want?” Yuuji asks sternly. “I can’t let you do whatever.”

“I want to kill and torture, of course. The infected will do just nicely. I want to be hailed as the strongest, the best. With everyone in their rightful place beneath my feet. This world is not like the society of old. People will need guidance and symbols to respect. And I want it all, at the top.”

Sukuna walks down, swaggering to Yuuji's level. "And you, Yuuji-kun. What do you want?"

"I don't want people to suffer." Yuuji replies easily.

"I can deliver them, I can rescue them. Kill the poor creatures out there starving in hunger and pain. I can wash away the filth."

Yuuji believes him, damn it. He does, he really does. Sukuna cleared out the whole street in seconds. And Japan has a huge population. With even 50% being infected... that is millions. So many dead. And for every infected still alive.. that is risk that more will be taken over.

The reality of the past week hits him. There is no way for humanity to survive without power like Sukuna, power like Gojo. Yuuji can't bash in every skull, adding more and more faces to his nightmares.

Yuuji can't keep killing. Can't be the battering ram taking down every infected person. Eventually, Hakari will fall, Fushiguro will fall. They are more useful than he is. They are stronger and smarter, with better ties to both civilians and with the remaining sorcerers clans.

Yuuji is dead weight. The goal of finding Sukuna's fingers is low, low on the priority list when dealing with the downfall of civilization. Sukuna will fester inside of him, trapped.

Or Yuuji can just... let go of his hold. It is so easy to just release, breath out and let Sukuna take over. Yuuji won't have to see, won't have to be the one snapping the necks of the infected.

"Yuuji - I can give you the peace you crave." Sukuna promises. "You won't feel hunger or thirst or pain with me in control. You won't need to worry about your little friends - I will keep them safe for as long as there are infected humans to play with."

Yuuji bites his lips, tempted. He wants to accept but - but he doesn't know. He doesn't want to let his friends down. He promised them first, promised to keep Sukuna under his control. Letting him loose willingly is to give up everything he stands for.

Yuuji pulls himself up to the world. Fushiguro's dark eyes are wide with fear, his mouth in a worried line. The worry hasn't let up once since this whole thing started. Yuuji wishes he could offer Fushiguro peace instead.

"Sukuna has a proposition." Yuuji says instead of the words bouncing

in his head. "He will kill the infected and only the infected, in exchange for freedom and control over the alive civilians."

Hakari grunts. "Can he keep that promise - that no one alive will be harmed? That killing move he did is pretty damn helpful."

"I'll watch him. I still have control."

Fushiguro grabs Yuuji's blood soaked hand. "You sound like you are considering this. What about you?"

Yuuji stares at the stained pavement instead of Fushiguro's intense eyes. "It is quiet. When he is on the outside."

"Shit," Fushiguro hisses. "Shit, Yuuji. Don't leave me alone with him."

Yuuji bounces his gaze up, horrified. "I won't! Not forever. We can.. we can see about switching more, was what I was thinking. Just.. he comes up when dealing with infected, or other people?"

"You are serious." Fushiguro states. "Why?"

"Humanity is dead if we can't kill the infected." Yuuji replies. He squeezes Fushiguro's hand. "Please, tell me if this is too dumb."

Fushiguro bounces his head against Yuuji's skull hard. "Fuck you. I don't like it."

Yuuji presses back hard. "Neither do I. But - is it going to work?"

Fushiguro closes his eyes, eyelashes wet. "Fuck. Making a deal with the devil here."

It's not a no, Yuuji realizes. He steps back and away from Fushiguro and lets out a little wave, the pit in his stomach growing as he lets himself roll backwards into his body, dropping down - down - down.

It is hot. Hot and soft now, throne of bones replaced with long green grass. The sun beats down on him, clouds floating in light patterns in the bright blue sky. The air is clean, the scent from the wildflowers just fragrant enough to be noticed.

In the distance, Yuuji can imagine that he hears his grandfather's laugh. He closes his eyes and prays that he isn't making a mistake, isn't dooming the rest of the world to ruin.

On the dark, sticky pavement of a hallowed out city, Fushiguro shivers

despite the oppressive summer heat, nose blind now to the stench of rot. Sukuna shifts in Yuuji's body, presence eating up all the attention.

The civilians talking to Hakari turn to Sukuna, eyes blinking in confusion.

“Bow to me,” Sukuna hisses, dark delight on his face. “Bow to me, young human. I am your saviour.”

Fushiguro closes his eyes to the scene, surrounded by the dead.

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Chapter End Notes

That's a wrap, folks! Hope everyone enjoyed this little piece of horror, death and tragedy.

I did end up changing the summary as what I started writing and what I ended up with are two different pathways to the same ending.

Happy ending for Sukuna! Sadness for everyone else.

Anyways, comments of all kinds are welcome! I know this one is weird... I listened to a lot of black metal this month, what can I say?

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!